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NEWS AND NOTES

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AT BOSTON

The program meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English in Boston July 6 and 7 proved to be both pleasant and profitable. The session of July 6 was held in Wentworth Institute, where the assembly hall, seating probably three hundred, was completely filled. The Friday afternoon joint session with the Library Department was held in the lecture hall of the Boston Public Library, which was filled beyond the point of comfort, between four and five hundred being present.

On Thursday afternoon the general topic was the provision of extra work for pupils of superior ability. The first speaker, Charles L. Hanson, of the Mechanic Arts High School, Boston, began by taking a stand against the classification of pupils according to ability. Such a segregation is bad for the brilliant pupils inasmuch as it deprives them of the contact with the slower minds such as they must deal with after school days. Moreover, no such segregation is necessary in order to provide all the work needed by these brilliant youngsters. In the first place, they set themselves many special tasks, as several examples demonstrated. It is desirable also that time be left for such exercises as will preserve health. The brilliant pupils in each section stimulate the teacher to do better work and so indirectly benefit their slower fellows. These stronger pupils may easily be led to do extra reading, the reports of which may stimulate their more sluggish companions. In the memorizing of passages from literature rivalry will lead these more able students, if no limits are assigned, to do much more than the minimum required. Very frequently the clever may be called upon to tutor the dull and so to help speed up the work of the whole class. Doubtless it is desirable for the brilliant boy and girl occasionally to meet their equals and so realize that they are really not so exceptional as their own sections may make them seem. This may be managed by arranging competitions against the most brilliant pupils in other sections. Finally, these abler pupils may be drafted as the leaders in democratized recitations, in the work of the school program, and in literary societies.

Dudley H. Miles, of the Evander Childs High School in New York City, speaking next, pointed out two phases of the problem, first, dis-

covering the unusual ability, and second, giving it adequate development. We frequently fail in both these matters (1) because the weak must be helped and thus monopolize our attention; (2) because our classes are too large to leave us the time or the energy to care for the exceptionally able pupils; and (3) because we frequently look for ability of a special kind which is not much needed elsewhere and is perhaps not very common. Intelligence tests and subject-matter tests, particularly in silent reading, do help us somewhat in the discovery of special ability, but they do not reach all varieties of it—directive ability, for example. We must finally depend upon the alert observation of the teacher. It is quite important that we discover and train this exceptional ability, because, while the world's work is done by the mediocre, the world's progress is brought about by the exceptionally endowed.

There are four readily distinguishable varieties of superior ability: (1) unusual power of expression in language; (2) unusual taste and speed in reading; (3) high general intelligence; (4) what may be called directive ability. It seems easy enough to care for the composition genius by opening to him media of publication for his work. The reading club furnishes an easy provision for those who have especially quick comprehension and unusually discriminating taste in literature. The readers are not always so easily discovered as the writers or speakers. For instance, one shy lad proved able to read 727 words per minute, but was discovered only through a standard test. The pupils who have high general intelligence are not always deeply interested in fiction, but will usually be glad to make the special reports which the literature class so much needs. Directive ability may be utilized and developed through the socialized recitation and through the extra-class activities of the school, such as the paper, the organization of teams, literary societies, dramatic clubs, and so on.

Miss Lillian Whiton, of the Long Beach, California, High School, was unable to be present and her paper was read by the secretary. She was given charge of a group of thirty Freshmen whose I.Q.'s ranged from 59 to 90, so that many of them are what we usually call morons—not necessarily perverted, but stupid. Many more of these pupils are reaching the high school than formerly did, because of the changes in compulsory attendance laws. Usually, however, they are utterly unable to cope with the difficulties there and after repeated failures drop out at the earliest moment the law allows. The first objective with this group was the setting up of a taste for reading. London's *Call of the Wild* was selected as the classic for study, and the pupils were encouraged merely

to get the most out of the story. Discussions, retelling, reading by the teacher, were used. No oral reading was done by the pupils, because they could not read well enough. Soon a room library was established and the teacher told incidents from different books to pupils who she thought might become interested in those particular books. After that she browsed with the pupil, helping him to select for himself a book to try out. Finally pupils began to ask for books by certain favorite authors. In the second quarter book reports were inaugurated—not quizzes, but conferences with the teacher over the books read. This furnished another means for guidance. By the end of the semester everyone had read the minimum Freshman requirement and more than half the class had read two to six extra books. The second semester's work emphasized composition, especially through social letters, some of which were real ones to be used by the writers, and many of which were not.

It is hoped that by the end of the third semester all the pupils will have met the minimum Freshman requirements in English. So far twenty-four of the thirty are still in school, happy because able to meet the requirements, and benefited not only by the acquisition of a taste for reading—especially valuable to those who might otherwise get into mischief—and considerable improvement in their power to write, but also by the social contacts which would otherwise have been denied them.

The last speaker on the program was Ralph P. Boas, of the Central High School, Springfield, Massachusetts. Mr. Boas, like Mr. Hanson, opposed the classification of pupils according to ability. He caused approving smiles when he spoke of the power of administrators to block the efforts of the classroom teacher. He told how, as head of the department, he had advised some of his teachers in the handling of a group of very slow pupils and finally, when they had professed themselves unable to solve the problem, had declared that he would show them. The next semester the class was abolished. The democracy of segregating the pupils according to apparent ability is open to serious question. The adolescent genius need not be taken too seriously anyway, for usually there is nothing permanently extraordinary about him. Such classification is not necessary because there is already plenty for all to do. The extra-classroom activities fairly reach out for these pupils of superior ability so that there is no trouble about their having time heavy upon their hands. This is perhaps more true than it should be, because after all, scholarship should be first in a school. If there is strict grading, so

that no one who is not prepared for a class is allowed to enter it, there will not be such a gap between the ability of the best and the worst pupils as to make successful co-operation impossible. If, further, the pupils are classified according to their future interests, college preparatory pupils in one group, technicals in another, and the commercials in another, the classes should be homogeneous enough for good work. As a means of stimulating the able pupils to do all they can it is possible to organize scholarship societies and to give scholarship pins. We all ought, of course, to work for the joy of working, but none of us object, when the work is done, to having our ability and devotion recognized.

There was some little discussion from the floor following the papers and Mr. Miles was called back to tell whether he believed definitely in classification or "stratification" according to ability. He answered most emphatically that he did, pointing out that it would have been impossible for the pupils whom Miss Whiton had, or even for any several degrees better, to have worked profitably in a class with exceedingly quick and clever schoolmates. If all the teachers had sufficient personality and if the classes were small enough and few enough per day so that the teacher had time and energy to provide for individual needs, perhaps this segregation would not be necessary.

The Friday afternoon joint session with the Library Department began with a paper by A. B. deMille, of Winthrop Highlands, Mass., on "Books for Boys." All educators are agreed upon the value of wide reading, but there is considerable difference as to what, how, and when our young people should read. We may get some basis for an answer to these questions by noticing the underlying needs of the situation. What the boy will read is almost wholly a matter of habit and environment. If we can create throughout his school life the proper environment, we can hope then to solve the problem. The teacher of English must be enthusiastic about books, must have a sound and wide knowledge, and must be able to read *well*. He may frequently seize five minutes at the end of a recitation period for reading a paragraph or two from such books as Conrad's *Typhoon* or Masfield's *Story of a Round House*. After a little of this he may, without insistence, propose a reading club, meeting for half an hour now and then. In order to show boys that reading is not merely a vagary of the English department, he may secure the co-operation of his colleagues by suggesting to them books which will be useful in their departments. Of course those that he suggests will be useful to the English department also. For instance, he may suggest to the science department *Life of Edison* and *The Chemistry of a Candle*; to

the history department, such a book as *Scaramouche*. The English teacher must aim at reading for reading's sake; that is, for reading which has no immediate application. Very frequently our boys miss something because they regard books as guides and philosophers rather than as friends. Unfortunately, the boy now frequently reads what we think he ought not—*The Motor Boat Boys*, *The Submarine Boys*, and so on. The chief objections to these books are that they do no good, and that, because they are monotonous, they act as a drug upon the youthful mind. They lead either to the abandonment of reading, or to the selection of very undesirable material later. How shall we improve this choice? This may be considered under (1) how the boy shall read, (2) when the boy shall read, and (3) what he shall read. Unquestionably he needs guidance, but if this is too obvious or too insistent, it may arouse in him such opposition as to defeat its own ends. If it is suggestive and incidental, yet enthusiastic, it may lead him to appreciate and to read the very best in literature. Such guidance can come only from one who is himself a book man.

When? We must fight for English time within the school period, using as the basis of our argument the fact that sound reading tends to produce sound minds. As regards outside time, all we can do is to organize the interest of the boys so that they will take for reading the time which would ordinarily be given to something less worthy.

What? The teacher does not need to insist upon contemporary literature, because his pupils will read that anyway, but rather upon the time-tested books which are known to be great. Incidentally, it is safer to offer to boys books which other boys have liked rather than the latest thing from the press. Two criteria should be used in compiling a list of books for boys: (1) They must have passed the examination of frank and unbiased boyish criticism. (2) They must have literary merit, not necessarily high literary quality, but good clear style, reasonable plot construction, and sound views of life, even although the story be shot through with adventure and excitement. Boys may be told directly that from reading they may gain much besides mere amusement—mental strength and moral tone, reserve stores for the daily work of after life, strength of personality, and a resource for hours of loneliness when books may be their companions. Books of travel will open up new realms for them; biography will introduce them to good men and true, great hearts worth knowing; the novel and the drama will stir their imaginations deeper than ever plummet sounded.

Before his address Mr. deMille had given out a large number of mimeographed copies of a list of books for boys compiled by him as

secretary of the New England Association of Teachers of English for the New England Library Association. This list will appear shortly in the *English Journal*.

Dr. Percy W. Long was allowed ten minutes to present a new movement for the stimulation of interest in poetry. The gist of his remarks follows:

The reading and discussion of poetry in secondary schools tends to emphasize more and more the meaning or message of the poet, the mood or spirit of his work—in short, its aesthetic qualities—rather than matters of historical and biographical interest with the explanation of difficult words and obscure allusions. In order to promote this emphasis on human interest and to provide ready material for such teaching, the School and Poetry Association has been formed. Under the presidency of George Herbert Palmer, it welcomes to membership all teachers, writers, librarians, and other persons who care to promote this movement. Its organ of expression is a little magazine of verse for young people to be used in classrooms and school libraries, consisting of about sixteen pages, to be issued regularly throughout the school year. This periodical, called the *Gleam*, contains provisionally as its features a hitherto unpublished poem by a well-known American poet, a number of poems by secondary-school students representing different parts of the country and different grades, several recent poems reprinted with full comments and questions to stimulate thought and group discussion, and the treatment of one standard poem in the manner customary for preparation for the Comprehensive Examination. The Advisory Board of the magazine, chosen from distinguished poets and teachers of poetry, comprises: Raymond Macdonald Alden, Katherine Lee Bates, Grace Hazard Conkling, John Erskine, Percy Wallace MacKaye, John Matthews Manly, Josephine Preston Peabody, Charles Swain Thomas. Members of the Association, upon payment of the annual dues of one dollar, receive the publication for one year without further charge. Copies for classroom use may be ordered at ten cents apiece. All correspondence concerning the periodical and the Association should be addressed to the Secretary and Editor, Paul S. Nickerson, Principal of the High School, Canton, Massachusetts.

It is earnestly hoped that teachers who are devoted to the teaching of poetry will give this enterprise a trial by ordering at least ten copies of the first autumn number for use in one or two classroom periods. Those who are interested but hesitate can secure the immediate success of the Association by a favorable decision.

The first issue of the *Gleam* made a very favorable impression upon the hundreds who received sample copies.

The other representative of the National Council upon this program was Miss Helen Cosgrove, of the Horace Mann School of Teachers College, New York City. Her main thesis was that the purpose of reading

is fun and more fun and that therefore the chief purpose of the English teacher is to make reading fun. In order to do this she needs to be a book expert and to get into the fun of books with children, thrill with them, laugh with them, and carry on with them the kind of conversation we all enjoy most, a give-and-take of opinions concerning the books we read and the plays we see. This, rather than analyzing paragraphs and outlining plots, is what they are going to be doing when they leave school.

THE SPEECH COMMITTEE

In order to co-ordinate more effectively all the agencies at work for the improvement of American speech, a joint committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Association of Teachers of Speech, and the American Federation of Women's Clubs has been organized. Professor Glenn N. Merry, head of the department of public speaking at the State University of Iowa, is chairman of the new committee, and the other representatives of the National Council are Miss Claudia Crumpton, of Detroit; Mr. John M. Clapp, of New York City; and Mrs. Guy Stevens Farrington, of Los Angeles.

A preliminary statement of the general policy of the committee follows:

The committee recognizes that our language is not fixed and dead, but living and subject to constant change; that two general standards of usage exist, good English and vulgar English, and that the usage by the educated class should set the standard of American speech.

The policy of the committee is determined by a broad ideal of avoiding purism, fadism, and artificial speech on one hand and vulgarism on the other.

The committee believes that distinctness of utterance and agreeable voice quality are achievements in speech worthy of cultivation.

The committee seeks to co-operate with all forces emphasizing the usage of distinctly and agreeably spoken standard English in America.

The committee feels that training in effective speech presents one of the best methods of developing personality.

The committee recognizes and appreciates the stress now being placed in public schools upon the use of acceptable English, and seeks to encourage emphasis upon speech improvement *throughout the entire school year*.

However, two "Better Speech Weeks" are recommended, one during the second week in November and the other during the third week in February. The February observance is to be preferred for schools.

The committee recommends that remedial aid be given in our public schools to children possessing defects of speech.

Where it is needed, the committee hopes to co-operate in an advisory capacity with teachers emphasizing instruction in standards of American speech.

THE GREATER CHICAGO ENGLISH CLUB

At a dinner held at the Chicago College Club on May 26, the last program of the year and the annual election of officers were held. In accordance with the plan for the past year to include at each meeting a talk and readings by one of the well-known Chicago authors, Mrs. Florence Kiper Frank furnished the program. She spoke about a new phase of the drama which is to be experimented on in Chicago this fall. By request she followed her highly entertaining and instructive talk with some exquisite readings from her own poems.

In the business meeting that followed, some carefully considered plans for the extension of the Club, prepared by the Advisory Board, were presented by various speakers. These plans include enlarging the Book Club aspect of the Club by close co-operation with the Public Library. Groups in the Club will choose for special attention work along the following lines: Membership, Education, Library, Publicity, Literature, Scribblers' Club, and Drama.

The steering committee of the Book Club consists of the officers of the English Club, the City Librarian, a member of the American Library Association, a director of the Woman's City Club, a principal of a school, a writer, an editor, and a bookseller. The hearty support of these various interests augurs well for the increased effectiveness of the Club in one of its aims—that of promoting the mutual appreciation and co-operation of the best literary interests of the city.

NEBRASKA COUNCIL

The Nebraska Chapter of the National Council of Teachers of English met May 27 at the University of Nebraska. Dr. H. B. Alexander, of the University, president of the Nebraska Chapter, was in the chair.

The afternoon program consisted of three papers. In the first, "May and the Folk Festivals," Miss Elisabeth Wittman, of the Lincoln High School, suggested that the May Day lore would furnish valuable and fascinating material for study in English classes in the spring and would adapt itself particularly well to pageants.

Miss Sarah T. Muir, head of the English department of the Lincoln High School, speaking on "The Future of Oratory," pointed out that

radio opens to speakers today a wider field and offers them an incentive far more vast than any they have had in the past. She declared further that the great orators of the past exhibited the very qualities that are most demanded of speakers today, simplicity and common sense.

"Drama and Pageantry" was the subject presented by Miss Belle Ryan, assistant superintendent of the Omaha schools. Miss Ryan dwelt principally upon the civic value of pageantry, giving incidents from her experience to show how participation in such entertainments develops the child's sense of responsibility and the parents' interest in the community.

At the evening session, which followed a dinner at the Lincolnshire Club, Miss Viola Gray, Lincoln High School, expressed the hope that, because the Middle West preserves a type of life that should be kept alive in the drama, this section may become proficient in dramatic technique.

Keene Abbott, of Omaha, novelist and short story writer, read from the *Outlook* one of his stories, "The New Great Thing," an authentic Indian narrative of the building of the first railroad across Nebraska.

Walter L. Locke, of the *Nebraska State Journal*, concluded the program, speaking on "Back to the Soil." He proposed to develop a feeling for the spirit of the plains, emphasizing the wealth of literary material there that is yet unmined.

THE PERIODICALS

SUPERVISED STUDY

J. W. Heckert contributes to the *Journal of Educational Research* for May an account of an experiment to determine "The Effect of Supervised Study in English Composition." The work was carried on by means of parallel groups in the ninth grade of the high school connected with Miami University. The pupils whose study was supervised gained 7.0 points on the Hillegas Scale as against 2.6 points gained by the unsupervised. Comparisons are made to show that the brighter 50 per cent of the children gained 9.8 points, while the slower half gained 4.27. On the other hand, those who had high initial ability in composition gained less than those whose preliminary scores were low. Examination of the scores leads an outsider to wonder whether individual scores were not largely influenced by the fortunate or unfortunate choice of a topic on the different occasions. The experimenter's conclusions are that supervision of study in English composition pays, but that the teacher must

know the specific elements in the special field and must know children well. He thinks also that a case book, recording methods which have proved useful, would be valuable to the ordinary teacher attempting such work.

THE SOCIALIZED RECITATION

In the *Elementary School Journal* for June, Maurice W. Taylor presents "Some Points in Favor of the Socialized Recitation." He, too, made use of the parallel-groups method, this time in grades five and six in Sand Springs, Oklahoma. The experiment covered five regular or advance lessons, and five review lessons. In the former the socialized recitation proved more efficient in the ratio of 516 (examination) points to 394; in the latter, by 765 points to 720, thus disproving the theory of many teachers that this method is especially applicable to review work. The total result was that the socialized group scored 1,231 points against the controlled group's 1,016.

SYLLABICATION IN TEACHING SPELLING

H. Alena Wolf and F. S. Breed, of the University of Chicago, carried on an experiment in grades four through seven to determine the effectiveness of syllabication in the presentation of spelling words. They also used equivalent or parallel groups, taught by the same teacher, by methods exactly identical except that in the experimental groups the words were syllabicated when first presented on printed cards and in the control groups they were presented whole. The lesson plan, in accordance with the latest opinion, was (1) a visual presentation, with the pronunciation and development of meaning; (2) attention to any particularly difficult portions of the words; (3) oral and written spelling by pupils; (4) study; (5) review of previous day's lesson; (6) test. The result showed that the "syllabication" class in grades five and six gained 18.3 words spelled correctly, as compared with 18.2 gained by the control class. In grades four and five the "syllabication" class gained 23.6 words spelled correctly, and the control class only 22.6. After the lapse of three weeks a retention test exactly similar to the initial test and the one at the end of the study was given. Loss during these three weeks was, for the experimental class in the fifth and sixth grades, 2.5 points, and for the control class, 1.8 points. In the fourth and fifth grades the loss was, for the experimental group, 3.6, and for the control group, 4.2. On the whole, syllabication does not seem to be so important a matter as has sometimes been supposed. It seems to be more helpful with the younger children than with the older.

STATISTICS

The June issue of the *School Review* is decidedly a statistical number. H. R. Bonner, of the United States Bureau of Education, contributes a study of the *Bureau of Education Bulletin*, No. 50, 1921, on "Teachers' Salaries." He attempts to show "The Salary Outlook for High-School Teachers." He finds that the increases in salaries were not sufficient to meet the increased cost of living until May, 1921, when it had begun to fall. He finds, moreover, that the salaries of teachers who have been in service more than five years average only 49.8 per cent more than the salaries of beginners and he argues that this is not likely to secure permanence in the profession. In view of the fact reported by B. E. McCormick in "A Study of Failures" in the same magazine, that the experienced teachers have much fewer failures than the inexperienced ones, this seems to be a serious matter.

The most interesting feature of Mr. McCormick's article is the report of English classes segregated according to ability. Pupils of high intelligence rating progressed twice to four times as fast as those of low rating, and only 9.1 per cent of them dropped out of school, while the lower group lost 28.6 per cent. At the end of the semester three tests were given. In a simple memory test on the rules of punctuation perfect score was made by 93.75 per cent of the "intelligent" group and by only 68.4 per cent of the "dull" group. When the test was repeated with no time limit, a perfect score was made by 55.1 per cent of the "intelligents" and by 47.3 per cent of the "dulls." In test 3, which was an *application* of the rules to actual sentences, a perfect score was made by only 8.5 per cent of the "intelligents" and by 23 per cent of the "dulls"! Whether this last startling result was due to the slower progress and more drills, Mr. McCormick does not discuss.

A third statistical article is by E. L. Thorndike and P. M. Symonds on "The Occupations of High-School Graduates and Non-Graduates." The results, though what should probably be expected, are sufficiently striking. If a scale of 7 units is formed, in which step 1 represents the unskilled day laborer, 4, a blacksmith, carpenter, mason, or plumber, and 7, a doctor, lawyer, or engineer, it will probably be found that more than 50 per cent of the male high-school graduates will be placed on either step 6 or 7 and more than 80 per cent *above* step 4. If a similar scale be formed for women, in which step 1 represents a dish washer or low-grade factory hand, 4, a clerk or typist, 7, a teacher in high school or an operator of a store with an income of \$2,000 or more, 60 per cent of the unmarried women graduates will land in groups 6 and 7, and nearly 90 per cent of them above group 4.

THE ENGLISH CENTERS

James F. Hosis's account of the work of the Chicago English Centers has appeared in a series of ten articles called "An Experiment in Cooperation," running through the first volume of the *Journal of Educational Method*. The closing article, in the June number, stresses the democratic procedure by which the supervisors and all the teachers worked together and their complete openness of mind as to what might be the best methods and materials to use. He points out that in the reconstruction of the work in any school it is best to begin with one phase and follow that through rather than to attempt a complete program at the start. So, in the English Centers, both in reading and in composition, pupils' purpose was adopted as the first and most important item of attention. Other necessary things naturally followed.

GRADUATE STUDY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

"American Literature as a Subject for Graduate Study" is discussed in the *Educational Review* for June by Arthur Hobson Quinn, of the University of Pennsylvania. We have, he says, no literary standards in this country, and we shall not have them without first having "historians and teachers of our native literature who will refuse to accept foreign judgment based on prejudice and native judgment founded on ignorance." We should, therefore, train graduate students in American literature. The graduate courses should deal with movements and the interrelation of movements and writers, whereas the undergraduate study must be largely of individual authors. This graduate study should include considerable United States history, social as well as political, because our literature is so intimately bound up with our history. Contrary to common supposition, there is plenty of material for investigation, even for a doctor's thesis. Such studies as have been made have served the purpose of showing the student the interdependence of all literatures and so of leading him back to the study of European backgrounds. The records furnish quite as difficult problems in investigation as anyone need wish.